2: Henry E-5 (1932-1934) 1941
SM3 Caingang SM3
Aweikoma

of the Kaingáng faith in the efficacy of "the laying on of hands." We already know what the multiplication of caresses means to the Kaingáng in the way of security, and the gentle application of warm infusions of herbs or bark to all parts of the body of a sick person is not different in kind from the reciprocal stroking of two young men lying in affectionate embrace. Still another way of curing the sick is to heat one's hands near the fire and lay them gently on the body of the patient. This high valuation of cutaneous contact is one aspect of the Kaingáng special interest in sensation.

But the Kaingáng do not only cure from without, they also cure from within; and to that end they administer a variety of herb and bark infusions in warm water. These are rubbed all over the surface of the body, for the Kaingáng cannot conceive of treating the inside of the body without also treating the outside.[28] Anyone at all may perform this tender and solicitous task, and it is no rarity to see a Kaingáng step aside from the trail to cut a few plants for someone else or to see him come back from the hunt with a handful of herbs for medicine. A number of these herbs are used as panaceas—they are applied with equal faith to relieve a headache or a pain in the chest or to heal a cut.[29]

Of all the herbs and barks that the Kaingáng use to treat the sick, one alone is based on something more than this kind of selection. The use of *kydlo nya sŭi*, "tapir's raw food," rests on a strong sense of its vital power. Tapir's raw food grows everywhere in the Kaingáng country. It is the favorite eating of the tapir and enjoys a wider use as a remedy among the Kaingáng than any other plant in their medicinal catalogue. But this herb is used not only to cure sickness but also to prevent evil. It is spread over the body of a dead tapir to please its *kuplŭng* so that it will not take all the rest of its brethren with it and leave mankind to starve, and in the same way it is placed all around the body of a dead infant to induce its *kuplŭng* to return to its mother. When a widow's hair and nails are cut, they are mixed with tapir's raw food before they are thrown into the water, so that they will not rot; and when she returns to camp after her isolation, tapir's raw food is strewn in her path to drive off the *kuplŭng* of her husband. So,

[28] Nowadays they do swallow the white man's remedies without rubbing them over their bodies.

[29] Their use is based not on exact knowledge of their efficacy in specific cases but on the simple faith that they are beneficial. The employment of herbs in this naive uncritical manner must lie at the roots of some of the great medicinal discoveries of primitive peoples, like quinine. Just as the Kaingáng scrape the bark of a number of trees and use them indiscriminately to relieve a variety of ills, the Indians of the interior of South America may have used the bark of the quina tree for a number of ailments until they observed that one disease in particular, malaria, yielded to it, whereas others did not. This marked the real discovery of quinine, one of the American Indian's great contributions to the relief of human suffering.

too, when a new-born child's ceremonial mother and father place its umbilical cord and placenta in the water, they wrap them in tapir's raw food. Throughout life's crises, wherever the threat of death is great or where the greatest stakes lie, tapir's raw food appears as a symbol to help the Kaingáng over difficult transitions.

When we review the techniques which the Kaingáng employ to cure their sick, one in particular seems in perfect harmony with what we know of the Kaingáng personality and world-view—that is the laying on of hands which accompanies every curing, no matter what additional therapeusis is utilized. This is at once a way of reassuring the sick by reawakening in them deep-rooted intuitions of security and a device for bringing the "physician" into rapport with his patient. Even herb infusions are not so constantly resorted to as the laying on of hands. The ceremony used by Thalú to cure her son is of a type well known throughout the primitive world and particularly in the Americas. The most remarkable thing about it, however, is that there should be only one such story from the Kaingáng and that it is so well known and so outstanding that it is told almost like a folktale. There has been nothing like it for a hundred years. *Thévé* extractions also have been disappearing, for the last that the Kaingáng remember occurred fifty years ago. The disappearance of curings by singing and by extraction of *thévé* are examples of the gradual simplification of the culture, which has been going on for centuries and of which we have abundant evidence from social organization and folklore.

The techniques of biting, spitting, blowing, and singing were obtained from the *aggiyúdn*, but the laying on of hands anyone could practice. The application of warm infusions and warm hands has nothing to do with the supernatural, except in so far as everything in the Kaingáng world is supposed to have come from the supernatural. The history of Kaingáng society has been one of long-continued disruption and of gradual reduction in the circle of security. Thus, as the human world grew more and more hostile, the supernatural, which was already alive with monsters and charged with death, began to lose the modicum of beneficence that it had had and the Kaingáng came to rely more on things they received directly from those they had known since childhood. It is significant in this connection that the last *thévé* extraction was done just about the time of the last extermination of an extended family. The Kaingáng have not become sceptical of the supernatural, but have come to rely little on its goodness.

Hunting Practices[24]

Since the Kaingáng have placed their faith largely in the efficacy of personal contact with the supernatural and the element of rapport is rarely

[24] All that is said here regarding tapir applies equally to deer.